

## A Grand Opening

According to *The Wilmington Messenger* of December 1, 1906, the opening of the library was a gala event. "The second story of City Hall was bedecked with chrysanthemums, ferns, and palms; the formalities were genial; and the ladies did not forget to place a large donation box in the center of the hall. Young ladies dressed to represent different books served refreshments."

After the first week in business, the newspaper reported that hundreds of citizens had patronized the library. The fiction department was the most popular, followed by travel, biography and philosophy. Favorite magazines included

The total number of books circulated and registrations, from April 1st, 1908, to April 1st, 1909, are as follows, to-wit:	
Books circulated .....	23,904
Registrations .....	569
The books and furniture are insured for \$3,000.00.	
The daily average of registrations..	5
Daily average of visitors.....	200
Daily average of borrowers.....	125
The appropriation of \$1,700.00 made by the City in June, 1908, has been expended by the Board of Trustees to April 1st, 1909, as follows, to-wit:	
Salaries .....	\$ 797.50
Books .....	456.77
Stationery .....	21.90
Lights .....	74.96
Furniture .....	68.55
Sundries .....	26.90
Total expended to April 1st, 1909 .....	\$ 1,446.58

Evening Dispatch May 9, 1909

From October 1906 to October 1910, 5025 books were added to the collection, with donations of books coming from sources such as the Wilmington Library Association, Hemenway School and the Firemen's Library. Many individuals gave books, some more than 100 volumes.

## Gift Day

Library use the first year was overwhelming, and it was apparent that government funding was not going to cover the cost of keeping the doors open. The library's first anniversary was celebrated as "Gift Day." A letter circulated throughout the community declared: "Our Public Library will be one year old on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of November; and, as it has outgrown our expectations in every respect, it naturally calls for a greater outlay of money than the present appropriation covers." The library regularly held exhibitions, benefits and other fundraisers to purchase books.

## Board of Trustees Established

An Act of the General Assembly, ratified the 21<sup>st</sup> day of February 1907, provided that "It shall be the duty of the Board of Aldermen of the city of Wilmington at its regular meeting in April 1907, and biennially thereafter, to elect five citizens of said city, two of whom shall be women, as Trustees, to have control and maintain one or more free libraries for the use of the public of Wilmington." Fittingly, the female members of the Board of Trustees were often officials in the North Carolina Sorosis.

Sources available in the Local History Room of Main Library

## Electric Lights

In 1908, the library Board of Trustees yielded to popular sentiment and decided to keep the library open until 9 pm; however, they warned that larger donations would be necessary if a night librarian was to be hired. They encouraged monetary gifts by placing a small bank for contributions in the reading room.

By 1909, an electric light system was installed which allowed the reading room to remain open from 10:00 am to 9:30 pm.

## The First North Carolina Collection

**LIBRARY WANTS MATERIAL.**  
Requests Donations of Matter Relating to North Carolina History.  
The board of trustees of the Wilmington Public Library desire to procure as much material relating to the State of North Carolina as is possible.

Evening Dispatch March 5, 1910

In 1910, the library Board of Trustees asked for donations regarding the history of North Carolina. Thus began the public library's North Carolina Collection, the first in the state. The same year the board successfully requested the city aldermen to appropriate \$350 to purchase files of *The Morning Star* from 1867.

## Library Miscellanea

### 1916

The librarian reports 8139 volumes in the collection. Two hundred people visited the library each day and approximately 75 of those borrowed books.

### 1917

Librarian Alice LeGrand worries about books that have been in houses infected by contagious diseases. A public health official is sent to collect the books and burn them.

Registrations 23  
Expenditures \$22.29  
Cash on hand 12.58  
\$34.87  
that the new typewriter had been bought for \$5.00 on the old Smith it was sold, making \$25.00 difference.  
a list of new books which with the Board, the list to be given and the order given to the Librarian.  
the Board decided that it would not purchase any more books until the new typewriter had been installed.  
to send payment for the new typewriter.  
the meeting adjourned.  
Alice LeGrand

Board of Trustees minutes  
July 1916

## WWI

The library sends books to Army training camps and purchases English war posters for display.

### 1919

The northeastern corner of the library is converted to a juvenile reading room.

## Chief Librarians

Miss Elizabeth Waddell (1906 to 1909)  
Miss Elizabeth P. Woodward (1909 to 1911)  
Miss Elise Emerson (1911 to 1914)  
Miss Alice LeGrand (1914 to 1919)



Wilmington  
Public Library  
2nd floor  
City Hall  
1906-1956